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1962/10/26

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

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BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

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RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

RSB-170, October 26, 1962

To authority to: DEPARTMENT OF STATE

() CLASSIFY as _____, OADR
() DOWNGRADING TS to (The Secretary) OADR
THROUGH: S/S
FROM : INR - Roger Hilsman
SUBJECT: Statements on the Cuban Crisis by Lower-Ran

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We are maintaining a close watch on all remarks relating to the current crisis by Soviet bloc nationals around the world. The reports that we have received through October 25 of such remarks indicate that:

(1) Soviet bloc diplomats (at least through October 24) were uninstructed and were expressing their own opinions (with the possible exception of those at the UN);

(2) Soviet statements that the blockade would be resisted with force seemed to stem largely from flag-waving responses in public defense of Soviet prestige, while in at least three instances of private conversations, Soviet officials foresaw a Soviet retaliation in some unspecified form, especially in the event of attacks on Soviet ships;

(3) East European officials were notably calm and foresaw no war resulting from the crisis.

Only four reports of remarks by Soviet officials indicate that these remarks may well have been made under specific instructions. [The Soviet Ambassador to Indonesia told the Indian Ambassador there] on October 25 that if the US sinks Soviet ships, the Soviets will sink US ships, but that the Soviets would not resort first to nuclear weapons. He said further that the Soviets are willing to negotiate and would "hold off their ships" during negotiations. Most significantly, the question of the removal of the rocket bases could be negotiated. The other three reports of remarks which were quite possibly made under instructions came from UN circles in New York where the Soviets were making relatively bellicose statements or circulating rumors with the evident aim of deterring the US from action against Cuba and from interception of Soviet ships.

Seven instances of strong Soviet statements made on October 23 and 24 occurred in either social or public situations in which the speaker was undoubtedly concerned with Soviet prestige and/or was responding from his own patriotic convictions. In isolated contrast, [the Soviet Ambassador to Mexico] stated at a social function that he did not know how the USSR would respond to the blockade.

All the reports of statements by Soviet lower-rank officials through October 24 are so miscellaneous and unpatterned in content that general lack of instruction seems apparent.

The reported reactions of East European officials indicate unconcern over the possibility of serious resort to force. However, with the exception of one statement to a Western correspondent, none of the statements made by East European officials were for public consumption.